

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LUSAKA 00147 190855Z
ACTION AF-10

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INFO AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA
AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG
AMEMBASSY KIGALI
AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
AMEMBASSY LILONGWE
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

C O N F I D E N T I A L LUSAKA 0147

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EWTN EWWT PEPR TZ ZA
SUBJ: ZAMBIA TOLD "DON'T PANIC" OVER CARGO RATE HIKE

REF: LUSAKA 141

1. ZAMBIAN MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS AND CHAIRMAN OF THE CONTINGENCY TRANSPORT COORDINATING COMMITTEE MR. HASWELL MWALE ANNOUNCED JANUARY 19 THAT THE TANZANIAN GOVERNMENT HAD INFORMED ZAMBIA THAT SHARP HIKES IN CARGO RATES (REFTEL) WERE ONLY PROPOSALS SUBJECT TO NEGOTIATION. ACCORDING TO A STATEMENT ISSUED BY MWALE A MESSAGE FROM THE TANZANIAN PRIME MINISTER TO HIS ZAMBIAN COUNTERPART STATED THAT THE TANZANIANS WILL SUBMIT THE PROPOSALS TO THE ZAMBIAN GOVERNMENT. THE MESSAGE SAID THE MAJOR TANZANIAN CONCERN WAS THAT OF INADEQUATE TRANSPORT TO HAUL ZAMBIAN GOODS PILING UP IN THE DAR ES SALAAM PORT.

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PAGE 02 LUSAKA 00147 190855Z

2. ACCORDING TO MWALE, MORE THAN 300 RAILWAYS WAGONS AND 70 CARGO TRUCKS HAVE BEEN SENT TO DAR IN THE PAST FIVE DAYS. THE MINISTER SAID THAT MEASURES ARE NOW BEING TAKEN TO ENSURE ADEQUATE TRANSPORT BOTH TO AND FROM DAR, AND THAT HE AND THE PRIME MINISTER HOPED THAT THE BACKLOG WOULD BE CLEARED WITHIN 30 DAYS THROUGH THIS MOBILIZATION

EFFORT. PRIME MINISTER CHONA HAS CALLED ON ZAMBIAN IMPORTERS AND EXPORTERS AND DAR PORT WORKERS "TO MAKE SURE THAT RAILWAY WAGONS AND CARGO TRUCKS ARE EXPEDITIOUSLY LOADED AND OFF-LOADED."

3. THE REPORTED TANZANIAN MOVES CAUSED GREAT CONCERN IN THE ZAMBIAN PARLIAMENT AND A NUMBER OF MP'S MADE VERY CRITICAL STATEMENTS. A CABINET MINISTER ON JANUARY 18, HOWEVER, TOLD THE HOUSE, "THE GOVERNMENT WISHES TO PLEAD WITH YOU TO TONE DOWN YOUR REMARKS ON THIS ISSUE." MINISTER OF LANDS AND AGRICULTURE, MR. ALEXANDER CHIKWANDA, WARNED THE MP'S TO EXERCISE CARE IN THEIR STATEMENTS AND POINTED OUT THAT THEIR SPEECHES COULD HAVE SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES. CHIKWANDA ALSO NOTED THAT IT WAS WRONG FOR ZAMBIANS TO TRY TO BLAME OTHER COUNTRIES FOR PROBLEMS "CREATED BY OUR OWN FAILURES."

4. COMMENT: THE IMMEDIATE SHOCK AND ANGER AGAINST TANZANIA SHOULD BE ABATED BY THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE INCREASE IN DEMURRAGE CHARGES IS ONLY A PROPOSAL TO BE DISCUSSED WITH THE ZAMBIANS. THIS EPISODE, HOWEVER, HAS PUT IN STARK RELIEF ZAMBIA'S NEARLY COMPLETE DEPENDENCE FOR ITS TRADE LIFELINE ON ITS NEIGHBOR TO THE NORTH. WHETHER OR NOT ZAMBIA WILL SEEK LONG-RANGE SOLUTIONS TO ITS TRANSPORT DIFFICULTIES, OR ONLY DEAL WITH THIS IMMEDIATE CRISIS, REMAINS TO BE SEEN. CLINGERMAN
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PAGE 03 LUSAKA 00147 190855Z

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